

*TOWN OF*



*ROCKPORT*

## **Historic District Commission**

Town Office Building, 34 Broadway, Rockport, MA 01966-1537

# **DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR HISTORIC DISTRICTS**

Revised 9/3/2011

Town of Rockport  
Design Guidelines for Historic Districts version 1.0.1

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# 1 Revision History

1. Version 1.0.0 Initial release of the document.
2. Version 1.0.1 Incorporate public review feedback. Organize section 6 to reflect the organization of Section 4.

# 2 Introduction

The specific design guidelines in this booklet are intended to encourage the appropriate treatment of historically significant properties by Applicants and foster predictability in the actions of the Historic District Commission (HDC). These guidelines also serve to protect the local historic districts at large by ensuring appropriate work is performed on all properties within the districts. While the HDC has the authority to permit Applicants to depart from the Guidelines, they are encouraged to follow them to the greatest extent possible and should not expect that the HDC will permit departure from them in most circumstances. Certain requirements shall be considered mandatory and are so indicated herein. For example, the use of vinyl or aluminum siding, unless a pre-existing condition, will not be permitted under any circumstances. Further, it should be understood that certain properties, and the specific features of those properties, may have greater architectural or historic significance and as such will be held to a more stringent standard.

# 3 Background

The purposes and the description of the Rockport Historic District is detailed below in an excerpt from the current Town of Rockport Historic District Bylaws:

## Section 5. Historic District

- a. Purpose. The purposes of the by-law, adopted under the provisions of General Law, Chapter 40C, are to promote the educational, cultural, economic and general welfare of the public and the owners of property located in historic districts, through the preservation and protection of the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places significant in the history of Rockport and the Commonwealth or their architecture, and to maintain and improve the settings of those buildings in the district.
- b. Establishing of Districts. There may be established in the Town of Rockport districts to be known as "Rockport Historic Districts" with the descriptions of each district to be set forth herein:
  - (i) Main Street Historic District - The Main Street Historic District is hereby created and shall be bounded and described as shown on a plan entitled "Main Street Historic District", dated June 1976, a copy of which is on file with the Town Clerk's Office, which plan is incorporated herein by reference.
  - (ii) Mt. Pleasant/South Street Historic District - The Mt. Pleasant/South Street Historic District is hereby created and shall be bounded and described as shown on a plan entitled "Mt. Pleasant/South Street Historic District", dated June 1976, a copy of which is on file with the Town Clerk's Office, which plan is incorporated herein by reference.
  - (iii) Downtown Historic District - The Downtown Historic District is hereby created and shall be bounded and described as shown on a plan entitled "Downtown Historic District" dated September 1980, a copy of which is on file in the Town Clerk's Office, which plan is incorporated herein by reference.

- (iv) **Broadway Historic District** - The Broadway Historic District is hereby created and shall be bounded and described as shown on a plan entitled "Broadway Historic District" dated September 1982, a copy of which is on file in the Town Clerk's Office, which plan is incorporated herein by reference.

## **4 Review Criteria**

### **4.1 WHAT CHANGES ARE SUBJECT TO REVIEW**

All changes to the exterior of any building in the district regardless if a building permit is required must be reviewed by the HDC. Such changes include, but are not limited to the replacement and/or alterations to:

Please refer to Section 6.2 for detailed guidelines of items in the list.

### **4.2 CONSTRUCTION PROCESS**

3. Demolition
4. Structures damaged by fire, storm, or other disaster
5. New Construction and all proposed alterations of, and additions to, existing structures

### **4.3 BUILDING COMPONENTS**

1. Building Materials
2. Windows and Doors
3. Trim and Siding
4. Roofs, Roof Appointments, Chimneys, Gutters and Skylights
5. Fences, Site Improvements. Including fences and Landscaping used only for the purposes of determining sight line visibility. These are considered impermanent and are deemed not to block sight lines from a public way. If there is a question regarding visibility, the final determination will be made by the HDC.
6. Exterior Walls, including Wood, Stucco and Masonry
7. Antennas and Satellite Disks
8. Solar Panels and other Alternative Energy Systems
9. Porches and Decks
10. Outbuildings
11. Storefronts

### **4.4 WHAT CHANGES ARE NOT SUBJECT TO REVIEW OR CERTIFICATION**

1. Ordinary maintenance, repair or replacement of any exterior feature which does not involve change of design, material or outward appearance
2. Landscaping with plants, trees or shrubs

3. Temporary signs or structures
4. Terraces, walks, driveways, sidewalks or similar structures provided they are substantially at grade level
5. Screen planting
6. Screen and storm doors, screen and storm windows, window air conditioners, light fixtures
7. Color of paint
8. Color of roof material
9. Signs

## **5 General Guidelines**

Although the points listed in these General Guidelines are covered in detail in the Specific Design Guidelines that begin on the following pages, nine general guidelines are listed here to highlight their importance:

1. Character defining features such as period ornamental and decorative detailing shall not be removed unless their condition in the opinion of the HDC is such that repair or restoration is not possible.
2. Deteriorated ornamental, decorative and characteristic architectural features shall be repaired or restored, rather than replaced.
3. The use of vinyl or aluminum siding is prohibited unless replacing a pre-existing condition on a property deemed to have no historical significance. The pre-existing use still requires approval of the commission. It is preferable to replace any existing synthetic siding with wood.
4. Existing wood windows shall be retained and repaired and restored to the greatest extent possible. See Section 6.3.2.
5. There shall be no new openings on primary façades, except to restore original openings.
6. Missing architectural features shall be documented as authentic by photographic, physical or historical evidence before they are reproduced.
7. Historic outbuildings, such as barns, fish shacks, and automobile garages, shall be preserved on their original sites.
8. New fences shall not act as visual barriers from public ways.
9. Traditional building materials shall be used when available. Substitution of other wood or synthetic materials shall be at the sole discretion of the HDC

## **6 Specific Guidelines**

### **6.1 CONSTRUCTION PROCESS**

#### **6.1.1 DEMOLITION**

Building and structures, including additions and outbuildings, shall not be demolished without review and approval of the HDC.

## **6.1.2 STRUCTURES DAMAGED BY FIRE, STORM, OR OTHER DISASTER**

Plans for the reconstruction of the damage structures shall be reviewed and approved by the HDC

## **6.1.3 NEW CONSTRUCTION**

1. The HDC will review all proposed alterations of, and additions to, existing structures and all new construction.
2. Alterations, additions and dormers shall be compatible with the character of the building and earlier additions in terms of size, scale, massing, material, location and detail. The original portion of the building and earlier additions shall continue to be recognizable apart from the addition by means of massing, articulation of setbacks, trim and ornamental detail. Additions shall be designed so that the primary elevations of the original building remain clearly delineated.
3. Dormers shall not exceed the height of the existing ridge of the roof slope on which they are constructed. Dormer width shall not exceed 80% of existing ridge and/or be set back from gable ends a minimum of one foot. Shed dormers shall have a positive roof pitch of not less than three inches of rise per one foot of run. Gable or "doghouse" dormers shall be an appropriate size and scale and compatible with the existing structure. Dormer fenestration shall respect the existing building in both size and location of windows
4. New construction shall respect the existing historic streetscape. The historic relationship of buildings to the street, including setbacks and open spaces, shall be maintained.
5. The HDC will consider the appropriateness of the size and shape of the building or structure both in relation to the land area upon which the building or structure is situated and to buildings and structures in the vicinity.

The HDC may impose dimensional and setback requirements in addition to those required by the Zoning By-laws.

## **6.2 DETAILED BUILDING COMPONENTS**

### **6.2.1 BUILDING MATERIALS**

### **6.2.2 WINDOWS AND DOORS**

1. The HDC requires that historically significant windows and doors (including side windows, transoms, and hardware) existing at the time of application shall be repaired or restored, not replaced.
2. If an applicant believes that an existing window cannot be repaired, the Applicant's proposal for replacing window[s] will be reviewed on a window-by-window basis by the HDC. Those windows determined to be beyond repair should be documented with photographs and then approved by the HDC for replacement.
3. If a window is to be replaced, the material and design of the new window, including the casing, size, number of panes and operation of window, shall not be changed, unless the a more historically accurate design can be documented.
4. If a "replacement window" is proposed, the HDC recommends using replacement sash kits rather than single unit inserts. The HDC will not consider solid vinyl replacement windows.

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5. If a complete window replacement is necessary, approval by the HDC of the model of window proposed is required. Acceptable windows must have permanently applied muntins no wider than 7/8" (or replicating the the appearance of the original window) applied to the exterior of the window and dark colored internal spacer bars.
6. Period doors, sidelights, transom and hardware shall be repaired and restored. If an applicant concludes that an existing door cannot be repaired or is an inappropriate door, the replacement door should be made of wood, appropriate to the period, and, if glazed with muntin bars that have true divided lights.

### **6.2.3 TRIM AND SIDING**

1. Historic trim and detailing should be retained. Repair and restoration of wood trim and siding shall be the Applicant's first consideration.
2. The dimensions and detail of any trim approved for replacement, such as cornices, fascias, soffits, rakeboards, cornerboards, window and door casings, etc. shall be replicated to match the original configuration.
3. If trim is beyond repair, the HDC recommends the use of wood. Alternative materials such as cellular P.V.C. will be considered on a case by case basis.
4. Character defining period siding (clapboards, shingles, etc.) shall be repaired or restored.. If new siding is to be proposed, it shall match the existing material, be applied at an appropriate exposure, and the courses should align with window sills, window head casings, door head casings or other horizontal reference points.
5. Artificial siding, including, but not limited to, vinyl, aluminum, asphalt, and artificial brick and stone, shall not be used. When approved by the HDC the use of synthetic clapboard siding commonly referred to as fiber cement clapboard or siding shall be installed with a smooth face exposed to view. The use of simulated woodgrain or other textured finishes shall not be permitted.
6. Awnings shall be fabricated of canvas or other like-kind material.

### **6.2.4 ROOFS, ROOF APPOINTMENTS, CHIMNEYS AND GUTTERS**

1. The use of wood shingle roofs are encouraged when appropriate.
2. Slate and terra cotta tile roofing shall be repaired or replicated in kind, including color, decorative patterns and style. Synthetic slate or tile shall not be used unless specifically permitted by the HDC.
3. Rubber membrane roofing shall not be used except in minimally visible locations or where required due to low slope roof conditions.
4. Historic dormers shall not be removed or enlarged. New dormers shall be added to unobtrusive locations, such as rear elevations, and shall be designed in a scale to match the period of the house.
5. Skylights shall not be installed on a primary façade. They shall be located only where minimally visible from a public way exhibit a flat low profile in a dark color to blend with the roof.
6. Existing chimneys shall be retained and restored. If replacement is necessary, the height and dimensions of the chimney shall be maintained, along with any decorative brickwork patterns. Permanent removal of any chimney requires approval of the HDC

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7. All historically significant decorative metal, such as iron cresting, finials and weathervanes shall be retained.
8. Wood gutters shall be repaired and maintained.
9. Roof top HVAC and other mechanical elements shall be placed out of view from a public way.
10. Roof ventilation with a continuous low profile ridge vent extended fully to the ends of the roof is recommended over box ventilators.
11. Roof decks and enclosures require the approval of the HDC..

### **6.2.5 FENCES AND SITE IMPROVEMENTS**

1. Historic masonry walls and iron fences shall be maintained.
2. New fences and walls shall not prevent or restrict views of buildings from a public way. Tall solid fences and walls shall not be constructed as noise or headlight barriers. The design of fences shall be appropriate in scale and architectural style to the building, its site and the surrounding properties.
3. New street front fences and the front yard portion of side fences shall be open in character so as not to create visual barriers.
4. New fences and walls running along property lines with street frontage, as well as any section of a side yard lot line fence or wall that is forward of the main body of (i) the applicant's house or outbuilding or (ii) adjacent houses or outbuildings, shall not exceed 42 inches in height. Other new fences and walls shall not exceed 72 inches in height unless approved by the HDC.
5. Brick and stone walls (mortar or dry laid) shall use historically appropriate materials. Bricks and mortar joints shall be compatible in color, aggregate and joint profile with the building.
6. Stone walls may be dry laid or set in a mortar that is historically appropriate in color, aggregate and joint profile.
7. The following shall not be used for residential properties: (i) chain link fences, (ii) stockade fences, (iii) lattice fences, except as a side or rear yard garden element.
8. Alternative materials such as CPVC will be considered on a case by case basis. Premade vinyl fence sections shall not be permitted.
9. Trellises, arbors, and pergolas require approval of the HDC.

### **6.2.6 EXTERIOR WALLS, INCLUDING WOOD, STUCCO AND MASONRY**

1. No existing masonry whether brick or stone shall be painted. Existing masonry that has been previously painted may be recoated however the HDC strongly suggests that Applicants consider the removal of paint from existing masonry surfaces wherever possible. The application of paint to exposed plain concrete masonry units shall be considered by the HDC on a case by case basis.
2. Re-pointing masonry (sometimes referred to as tuckpointing) shall be appropriate in terms of the type, width, color and aggregate of the mortar to be used. Where new brick is required for rebuilding it shall match the existing material.
3. Sandblasting shall not be used to clean brick.



4. Variegated bricks shall not be used, unless to match an existing condition.
5. Stucco shall be repaired with a mixture that matches the original to the greatest extent possible.. Non-traditional synthetic based stuccos shall not be used.

### **6.2.7 ANTENNA AND SATELLITE DISHES**

1. Satellite dishes and antennas require the approval of the HDC

### **6.2.8 SOLAR PANELS AND OTHER ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SYSTEMS**

Applicants may consider alternative energy resources when submitting proposals. Solar panels may be approved provided the system will function in a practical manner and adhere to the following:

1. Panels shall be placed out of view from a public way. If not possible, they shall provide minimum visual impact on the surrounding neighborhood.
2. No change to the appearance of the buildings except for the addition of the panels.
3. The installation of the system does not destroy the significant historic features of the building.
4. If applied to the roof, the panels shall be positioned so as to match the existing roof slopes.

### **6.2.9 PORCHES AND DECKS**

1. Porches and entrance porticos, including ornamental details, shall be retained.
2. Open porches and porticos shall not be permanently enclosed or glazed.
3. Porch and roof railings shall be maintained in their historic design, including height.
4. Decks shall be located on less visible elevations and shall be constructed of wood with painted railings, posts and balusters consistent with the style of the structure. Alternative materials such as CPVC or stainless cables will be considered on a case by case basis. Elevated decks shall be furnished with an authentically fabricated wood lattice or vertical board skirting below the floor. Premade vinyl railings sections and/or lattice shall not be permitted.

### **6.2.10 OUTBUILDINGS**

1. Outbuildings are integral to the historic character of many Rockport buildings and shall be maintained in their original physical relationship to the main building. As important and often rare historic structures, outbuildings are governed by the same guidelines used for principal structures.
2. Conversions for other uses shall respect character defining features, such as irregular fenestration patterns and large barn or garage door openings.

### **6.2.11 STOREFRONTS**

Storefronts have typically been remodeled many times over the years. Historic storefronts shall be retained, including later remodeling that has acquired architectural significance as part of the history of the building.

1. New storefronts shall be compatible with the style of the building in design and materials.
2. If converting from a commercial to residential use, character-defining features such as storefront display windows shall be retained.

## 7 Amendments and Severability

1. The Rockport Historical HDC reserves the right to amend these Guidelines.
2. If any section of these Guidelines is deemed to be invalid, illegal or unconstitutional, then that section shall be severed from the text, and the remaining sections of these Guidelines shall continue to be in full force and effect.

## 8 Definitions

**Traditional building material** is any material which is used for a construction purpose. Many naturally occurring substances, such as clay, sand, wood and rocks, even twigs and leaves have been used to construct buildings. Apart from naturally occurring materials, many man-made products are in use, some more and some less synthetic. The manufacture of building materials is an established industry in many countries and the use of these materials is typically segmented into specific specialty trades, such as carpentry, plumbing, roofing and insulation work. They provide the make-up of habitats and structures including homes

**Character** refers to all those visual aspects and physical features that comprise the appearance of every historic building. **Character-defining elements** include the overall shape of the building, its materials, craftsmanship, decorative details, interior spaces and features, as well as the various aspects of its site and environment.

**A facade or façade** is generally one side of the exterior of a building, especially the front, but also sometimes the sides and rear. The word comes from the French language, literally meaning "frontage" or "face". The primary façade is defined as the most prominent side of a building as viewed from the primary public roadways with the historical districts.

In architecture, the facade of a building is often the most important from a design standpoint, as it sets the tone for the rest of the building. Many facades are historic, and local zoning regulations or other laws greatly restrict or even forbid their alteration.

**CPVC** is PVC (polyvinyl chloride) that has been chlorinated via a free radical chlorination reaction. This reaction is typically initiated by application of thermal or UV energy utilizing various approaches. In the process, chlorine gas is decomposed into free radical chlorine which is then reacted with PVC in a post-production step, essentially replacing a portion of the hydrogen in the PVC with chlorine.

## 9 Design Review Principles

When reviewing individuals applications, the Commission will be guided by the following design principles, which have been adapted from the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (1995) See [www.cr.nps.gov/hps/hli/introguid.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/hli/introguid.htm) for entire documentation. This document has long provided a coherent set of standards for historic district commissions, preservationists and architectural historians all over the country:

- The historic character of a property should be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property should be avoided.

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- Each property should be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, should be avoided.
- Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right should be retained and preserved.
- New additions, exterior alterations or related new construction that destroy historic materials, features and spatial relationships that characterize the property should be avoided. New work should be differentiated from the old and should be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale, proportion and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
- New additions and adjacent or related new construction, which, if removed in the future, would impair the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment, should be avoided.

## 10 Compliance

Work performed without or in conflict with the HDC approval are at risk of having to replace the offending work and can be subject to fines in accordance with Chapter 16 of the Code of Bylaws, and Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40C, Section 13.

For additional information please reference the State Statutes or request further details from the HDC.

<http://www.malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws>